

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 16, 2014 MEETING OF THE MUSLIM AMERICAN ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Muslim American Advisory Council (“MAAC” or the “Council”), pursuant to notice duly given, held a Meeting on September 16, 2014 at 3:00 p.m. in the James R. Thompson Center, 100 West Randolph Street, Suite 16-100, Chicago, Illinois 60601.

MAAC Members Present:

1. Sohair Omar, Co-Chair
2. Dr. Bambade Shakoor-Abdullah (via audio conference)
3. Dr. Irfan Ahmad (via audio conference)
4. Mumtaz Champsi (via audio conference)
5. Clyde El-Amin (via audio conference)
6. Tariq El-Amin (via audio conference)
7. S. Jafer Hasnain
8. Dzafer Kulenovic (via audio conference)
9. Dr. Sevil Kutay
10. Tariq Malhance
11. Eboo Patel (via audio conference)
12. Aisha Qadeem (via audio conference)

MAAC Members Absent:

1. Kareem M. Irfan, Esq., Co-Chair
2. Sikirat Adigun
3. Murad Moosa Bhaidani
4. Dr. Mohammed Kaiseruddin
5. Salim Al Nurridin
6. Ahmed Rehab
7. Dr. Mohammed Zaher Sahloul

Guests Present:

Molly Daily, Office of the Governor
Masood Iqbal, Compassionate Care Network (“CCN”)
Shahzad Kazi
Fatema Rehman Mirza, CCN
Nia Odeoti-Hassan, Office of the Illinois Senate President
Sher Rajput
Amalia Rioja, Office of the Governor
Sumaiya Saad, Office of the Governor

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Co-Chair Omar called the Meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

Ms. Saad called the roll. There being four (4) Members physically present and eight (8) Members participating via audio conference, a quorum was met.

II. Co-Chairs' Remarks

Co-Chair Omar introduced Sumaiya Saad, Policy Dunn Fellow in the Governor's office. Ms. Saad will be staffing the Council for the next ten (10) months and will be providing administrative support to Members.

Ms. Odeoti-Hassan reminded the Council of having broad representation in its membership. Co-Chair Omar noted that there are nominations pending with the Governor's Office, and that members appointed to serve on the Council reflect the diversity (e.g., ethnicity and geography) of Illinois' Muslim community.

Co-Chair Omar went on to remind the Members that one of the goals of the Council is to submit policy recommendations to the Governor. She encouraged Members to make suggestions regarding issues and areas of interest to help determine which speakers to invite to the Council's meetings.

III. Adoption of the Minutes

Having a quorum, Minutes of the Meeting held on June 17, 2014 were taken up for consideration. Co-Chair Omar noted that Ms. Odeoti-Hassan's title will be added to the Minutes. Mr. Malhance made a motion for the adoption of the Minutes with that correction. Mr. Hasnain seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Update on Governor Quinn's Refugee, Immigrant and New American Initiatives (Amalia Rioja, Deputy Chief of Staff, Governor's Office)

Amalia Rioja, Deputy Chief of Staff in the Governor's Office, presented on current initiatives in Illinois regarding refugees, immigrants and new Americans. More broadly, she discussed the Governor's establishment of the Illinois DREAM Fund Commission, which awards scholarships to undocumented students, the Illinois Finance Authority's loan program, which makes zero-interest loans available to undocumented students to pay for medical and dental school tuition and expenses, and Illinois Welcoming Centers, which offer various services related to education, employment and health in one location. She also mentioned the Governor's support in allowing non-visa status individuals to apply for a Temporary Visitor Driver's License and the formation of a subcommittee in the Office of Health Innovation Technology that will study healthcare exchange for undocumented individuals. Ms. Rioja summarized that these initiatives reflect the Governor's strong pro-immigrant rights position and dedication to making Illinois the most welcoming state in the country.

Members asked Ms. Rioja a variety of questions related to Illinois Welcoming Centers, who they serve, and how they can offer their assistance in expanding outreach to Muslim American and immigrant communities. Ms. Rioja responded that these centers are not limited to just new Americans, rather anyone can access and receive these services. Discussion ensued. Ms. Rioja and the Council agreed to work together to better reach Illinois' Muslim community.

V. Report by the Legislative Affairs Committee

Based on the positive impact of the "Muslim Constituent Liaison" position in the Governor's Office, Dr. Bambade suggested that other elected officials representing large Muslim populations designate a "Muslim Constituent Liaison" in their offices. She also suggested that MAAC consider federal policy issues, using a survey to collect qualitative data.

Co-Chair Omar agreed with Dr. Bambade's point regarding the designation of a "Muslim Constituent Liaison" in elected offices. She noted, however, that that request must be made to other elected officials by the Muslim American community; not the Governor. Furthermore, Co-Chair Omar commented that federal policy issues are beyond the scope of the Council. Mr. Al-Amin added that Muslim Americans interested in developing a federal policy agenda must convene separately. The Members agreed.

Co-chair Omar went on to highlight several bills recently signed into law by the Governor, including but not limited to increasing protections for migrant workers and pregnant women in the workforce, increasing services to survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking, and banning smoking on public college and university campuses. Additionally, she announced that the 98th General Assembly Veto Session will take place on November 19-21, 2014 and December 2-4, 2014.

VI. Report by the Economic Development Committee

Co-Chair Omar updated the Council on her continued discussions with the Illinois State Board of Investment regarding the addition of a socially responsible fund to the investment selection of the State of Illinois Employees' Deferred Compensation Plan. She proceeded to inform the Members of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's statewide economic development plan released in July 2014.

Co-Chair Omar stressed the importance of focusing on what is occurring here in Illinois with respect to Muslim business owners and educating them on their responsibilities as taxpayers, as well as the benefits and financial assistance available to them through various State agencies. Mr. Al-Amin mentioned similar work being done through the Inner-City Muslim Action Network's Muslim Run Project. Co-chair Omar proposed working together to disseminate State information and resources to these business owners. Mr. Al-Amin and Ms. Odeoti-Hassan offered to further develop and implement this outreach plan.

VII. Report by the Communications Committee

Co-Chair Omar updated the Council on her meeting with the Council on American-Islamic Relations—Chicago (“CAIR-Chicago”) and the Illinois Department of Human Rights (“IDHR”) and their progress on implementing cultural sensitivity workshops for State employees. She informed the Council that Hind Makki from CAIR-Chicago was invited to train IDHR’s senior team and the Illinois Municipal Human Relations Association on diversity issues concerning the Muslim community. She noted the importance of these diversity trainings as a proactive approach to help public employees better understand and respect our faith and traditions.

VIII. Other Business

None.

IX. Public Comment

None.

X. Adjournment

Mr. Hasnain made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Malhance seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The MAAC Meeting adjourned at 4:09 p.m.

Minutes submitted by:

Sumaiya Saad
Policy Dunn Fellow
Office of the Governor